



Is It Wrong to Have Friendship with Unbelievers?

Sixbert SANGWA • July 06, 2024

In today's interconnected world, forming relationships with people from diverse backgrounds and beliefs is almost inevitable. As Christians striving to live according to biblical principles, the question often arises: Is it wrong to have friendships with unbelievers? This question requires a nuanced understanding of biblical teachings and practical application in our daily lives.

The Bible provides guidance on the nature of our relationships with non-believers. In [2 Corinthians 6:14-15](#), Paul admonishes, *"Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?"* This passage highlights the importance of maintaining a distinction in our core values and spiritual foundations. However, it does not explicitly forbid forming friendships with those who do not share our faith. Additionally, [Proverbs 22:24-25](#) warns, *"Do not make friends with a hot-tempered person, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared."* This verse underscores the potential negative influence of bad company. The principle here is to be cautious of relationships that might lead us away from righteousness.

Jesus Christ Himself is a profound example of how to engage with unbelievers. Throughout His ministry, Jesus dined with tax collectors and sinners ([Matthew 9:10-13](#)) and conversed with the Samaritan woman at the well ([John 4:7-26](#)). His interactions were characterized by love, compassion, and a desire to bring others into the light of God's truth. Jesus' friendships were purposeful, aiming to influence and not to be influenced. Jesus' approach teaches us that it is not the presence of unbelievers that is problematic, but rather how we engage with them. He showed that meaningful relationships could be formed without compromising spiritual values. His life exemplifies how we can be in the world, forming genuine connections, while still upholding our faith and mission.

When forming friendships with unbelievers, it is crucial to evaluate our motives and the potential impact on our spiritual life. Are we aiming to reflect Christ's love and share the gospel, or are we susceptible to adopting non-Christian behaviors and values? [Proverbs 13:20](#) warns, *"Walk with the wise and become wise, for a companion of fools suffers harm."* It is wise to maintain relationships that encourage spiritual growth and uphold biblical values. Furthermore, [1 Corinthians 15:33](#) states, *"Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character.'"* This verse highlights the risk of moral compromise that can come from close associations with those who do not share our commitment to God. The influence of our companions can be profound, shaping our thoughts, behaviors, and ultimately our spiritual destiny.

The call to be *"in the world but not of the world"* ([John 17:14-16](#)) requires a delicate balance. We are to engage with unbelievers to fulfill the Great Commission ([Matthew 28:19-20](#)), sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. At the same time, we must guard our hearts and minds, ensuring that our core beliefs remain untainted by secular influences. [James 4:4](#) reminds us, *"Don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God."* This balance involves discerning the nature and depth of our relationships. It is one thing to have acquaintances and friendly interactions with unbelievers, but another to form deep, intimate bonds that might compromise our faith. [Ephesians 5:11](#) advises, *"Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them."* This implies that our closest relationships should support and reinforce our commitment to righteousness.

Practical Steps for Maintaining Godly Friendships

- Set Boundaries:** Clearly define the limits of your engagement to prevent compromising your faith. Avoid situations where you might be tempted to sin or where your Christian witness could be weakened. [Proverbs 4:23](#) advises, *"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."* Setting boundaries helps guard our hearts from harmful influences.
- Be a Light:** Reflect Christ's love and truth in your interactions. Let your life be a testimony of God's transforming power, as Jesus instructs in [Matthew 5:16](#), *"Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."* Our goal should be to positively influence our unbelieving friends, leading them towards the truth of the Gospel.
- Stay Grounded in Faith:** Regularly immerse yourself in God's Word, prayer, and fellowship with other believers. This will fortify your faith and provide the strength needed to influence rather than be influenced. [Hebrews 10:24-25](#) emphasizes the importance of Christian fellowship: *"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."*
- Discern Influence:** Evaluate the impact of your friendships. Are you drawing your unbelieving friends closer to Christ, or are you drifting away from your spiritual convictions? [Proverbs 27:17](#) states, *"As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another."* Surrounding ourselves with spiritually mature individuals helps us stay sharp in our faith.
- Pray for Wisdom:** Seek God's guidance in your relationships. [James 1:5](#) promises, *"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you."* Prayer can provide clarity and direction in how to navigate friendships with unbelievers.

The Bible is replete with warnings about the dangers of bad companions. [Proverbs 1:10-15](#) advises, *"My son, if sinful men entice you, do not give in to them. If they say, 'Come along with us; let's lie in wait for innocent blood, let's ambush some harmless soul...my son, do not go along with them, do not set foot on their paths; for their feet rush into evil, they are swift to shed blood.'" This passage highlights the potential dangers of succumbing to peer pressure and the importance of staying true to godly principles. [Psalm 1:1](#) also provides a clear directive: "Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers." This verse indicates that there is a blessing in avoiding the company of those who do not honor God.*

Close friendships with unbelievers can lead to several spiritual pitfalls. One significant risk is the potential for moral and spiritual compromise. When we form intimate bonds with those who do not share our faith, we might find ourselves gradually adopting their values and behaviors. This can lead to a dilution of our own spiritual convictions and a weakening of our witness for Christ. Another potential pitfall is the temptation to "soft-pedal" the truths of Scripture to avoid offending our unbelieving friends. There are difficult truths in the Word of God, such as the reality of judgment and hell. When we minimize or ignore these doctrines in an attempt to maintain our friendships, we risk compromising the integrity of our witness and calling God a liar for the sake of those already in the grasp of Satan. This is not true evangelism.

While the Bible advises caution in forming deep, influential bonds with unbelievers, it also calls us to evangelize the lost. We are to engage with unbelievers, not to be influenced by them, but to influence them towards Christ. [Matthew 28:19-20](#) commands us, *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you."* Our primary focus in relationships with unbelievers should be to share the Gospel and demonstrate God's saving power in our lives.

Although close relationships with unbelievers are not recommended, this does not mean we should ignore or avoid them. [2 Timothy 2:24-26](#) instructs us to be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful, and gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Our good deeds should shine before others, leading them to glorify our Father in heaven ([Matthew 5:16](#)). Additionally, the power of prayer should not be underestimated. [James 5:16](#) tells us, *"The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective."* We should bring our concerns for unbelievers before God, trusting that He will listen and act.

In contemporary society, discerning true believers from non-believers can be complex. Many people identify as Christians and engage in religious activities, yet their lifestyles and values may not align with biblical teachings. This discrepancy is particularly dangerous as it can lead to deceptive and harmful friendships. [Matthew 7:21-23](#) warns, *"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven... away from me, you evildoers!"* This passage underscores the importance of genuine faith demonstrated through obedience to God's Word. Further, in [2 Timothy 3:5](#), Paul cautions against those *"having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people."* This scripture clearly warns us to be wary of those who appear religious but do not live according to biblical principles. [Proverbs 4:23](#) advises, *"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."* Close associations with those who only outwardly profess faith but do not practice it can lead us astray and compromise our own spiritual integrity.

In summary, while the Bible advises caution in forming deep, influential bonds with unbelievers, it does not prohibit friendship altogether. Our interactions should be marked by a clear purpose of sharing Christ's love and truth, always mindful of maintaining our spiritual integrity. By setting boundaries, being a light, staying grounded in our faith, discerning influence, and praying for wisdom, we can navigate these relationships in a manner that honors God and furthers His kingdom. In all things, let us seek wisdom and guidance from the Holy Spirit, remembering that our ultimate goal is to reflect Christ and lead others to Him. By doing so, we can engage with the world in a way that is both impactful and faithful to our calling as Christians. Let our lives be a testament to God's transforming power, drawing others towards the light of His truth.

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